



News Release

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Media contact:
Cody Craynor
Public Information Office
Office: 801-538-6232

A Domestic Violence Death Every 21 Days

New Report Details Utah's Domestic Violence Homicides

(Salt Lake City) - A new report by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) shows that, from 2000 to 2002, 53 adults were shot, stabbed, strangled or beaten to death as a result of domestic violence in a current or past relationship- that's one death every 21 days.

"Domestic Violence Fatalities in Utah, 2000-2002, is the first report in Utah to detail all domestic violence homicides, not just those committed by a current or former partner or spouse," said, Teresa Brechlin, Domestic Violence Prevention Coordinator, UDOH. "This has allowed us to focus intervention and prevention efforts around all types of relationships and not just intimate partners."

The report summarizes findings by the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, (DVRFC) which is made up of government and community agencies. The goal of the DVRFC is to identify and review all adult domestic violence homicides, to describe trends and patterns regarding the facts and circumstances of homicides and to recommend improvements to those agencies that respond to domestic violence.

"By having a comprehensive review of domestic violence homicides, we are able to identify trends and then make recommendations and changes to the system to prevent future deaths from occurring," said Anna Fondario, Injury Epidemiologist, UDOH.

The report found that of the 53 victims, 34 were killed by current or former spouses or intimate partners, eight were killed by other family members, one was an innocent bystander and three were killed by police called to intervene in a domestic dispute. The other 17 included parents, friends or unrelated third parties. Twenty-seven of the decedents were killed by a firearm, 13 were killed by a blunt or sharp instrument, six

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were killed by hanging, suffocation or strangulation and three were beaten. The report also shows that of the victims:

- 16 were male, 33 were female
- 32 were White, non-Hispanic
- 14 were Hispanic
- 3 were of other race and ethnicity
- 63 percent had children 18 years of age or younger
- 46 were tested for the presence of alcohol at the time of death. Of those, 39 percent tested positive
- 43 were tested for the presence of illicit substances at the time of death. Of those 30 percent tested positive

Of the suspects:

- 39 were male, 8 were female
- 30 were White, non-Hispanic
- 8 were Hispanic/Latino
- 9 were of other or unknown race and ethnicity
- 23 were tested for the presence of alcohol at the time of the homicide. Of those, 74 percent tested positive
- 20 were tested for illicit substances at the time of death. Of those, 70 percent tested positive
- 45 percent had been under Department of Corrections supervision at some time prior to the homicide

Based on the report findings, the DVFRC has made recommendations that will be provided to the Violence Against Women and Families Cabinet Council, where implementation options can be explored. Recommendations include:

- Encourage judges and prosecutors to review entire histories prior to sentencing defendants convicted of domestic violence offenses.
- Strengthen existing public education campaigns that focus on aiding victims of domestic and intimate partner violence.
- Educate law enforcement personnel on and emphasize further implementation of “child witnessing” domestic violence laws.
- Ensure that culturally responsive educational materials are widely available to all populations.

To get help for domestic violence call 1-800-897-LINK. [Click here](#) for a copy of the report, or visit the Violence and Injury Prevention Web site at www.health.utah.gov/vipp.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.